

Prison Education as a Tool for Rehabilitation and Reformation in Indian Prisons: A Policy Analysis

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Abstract

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) states that “Access to education for all prisoners is one of the best ways of ensuring that upon release they will be better able to successfully reintegrate into society.”

In India, the primary focus on prisoners has conventionally been punishment-oriented instead of emphasis on their rehabilitation because of severe overcrowding and lack of resources. The imperialist-era Prison Act of 1894 was in force in India until 2023, which had the least number of recommendations for reform and rehabilitation of prisoners. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) conducted a comprehensive review of this old Act of Prison Management demanding a more humane and modern approach. This initiative ultimately developed the Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act of 2023 (Model Prisons Act 2023). The primary aim of this new act is to reform prison administration and to facilitate the reintegration of inmates into society as law-abiding citizens. On the other hand, the latest comprehensive guidelines are also provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs as Model Prison Manual 2016 to improve and standardize the prison administration across India with a special focus on reformation and rehabilitation measures, including prison education and correctional training programmes to provide inmates with learning opportunities for the improvement in terms of courage and self-assurance for their successful reintegration in society. However, the Prison Manual and Prisons Act are prepared and formulated with the vision of welfare and reforms for prisoners but the successful execution of these policies is the matter of this research paper. This paper will try to analyse the gaps between policy documents and their implementations on ground.

This research paper provides a comprehensive policy analysis of prison education and correctional training programmes as a tool for existing rehabilitation programmes within Indian context, examining its historical development, current practices, and

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potential for reform. The method of policy analysis would be used to critically examine the relevant policy documents.

Keywords: *Prison education, correctional training programmes, reformation and rehabilitation, Prisons Act 2023, Model Prison Manual 2016*

Introduction

Prison education is an essential part of the correctional system as it gives prisoners a chance to enhance their skills, get back on their feet and successfully reintegrate into society. The best way to reduce crime is by giving people a chance for a better life, and take it as the foundation of that opportunity (Alexander, 2010). Education within correctional facilities is one way to reduce systemic inequalities in the Indian setting, where a large proportion of the prison population is from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. According to the Prison Statistics India 2021 report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 25.2% of prisoners in India are illiterate and over 40.2% have education below 10th grade (GOI, 2021: xiii).

This data highlights the pressing need for structured prison educational programmes to bridge these gaps. In the colonial period, the prison system in India was based on a punitive philosophy with the belief in changing criminal behaviour through punishment rather than protecting human rights by implementing the reformatory system. The Prison Act of 1894 established the framework for prison management, but it did not provide meaningful provisions for the education or welfare of prisoners. The importance of education as a means of rehabilitation has been emphasized for years by various prison reform groups, including the Justice Mulla Committee (1983) and the Justice Krishna Iyer Committee (1987).

The 2016 Model Prison Manual, which specifically acknowledges education and vocational training as essential components of the rehabilitation process, was adopted due to these recommendations (MPM 2016). Today's educational initiatives in Indian prisons include everything from basic literacy and numeracy programmes, often run in partnership with the National Literacy Mission (NLM), to higher education programmes supported by organizations such as the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). These initiatives are further supported by vocational training that equips inmates with employable skills in areas such as computer literacy, carpentry, and tailoring.

Such programmes generate long-term social benefits by reducing recidivism rates in addition to improving offenders' employability and self-esteem. People who face incarceration often have low earnings even before they enter prison. This situation worsens after release as their income drops further and they face many problems in finding stable jobs, legal restrictions and lack of opportunities to make reintegration difficult. The emphasis is on the need for effective policies to support job training and employment to break the cycles of poverty and marginalization (Looney & Turner, 2018). This paper tries to discuss the recommendations and implementations of policy documents in current state of prison education of India, as well as its difficulties and possibilities for change. It emphasizes that additional financial assistance, legislative changes, and community collaborations are required to create a more effective and inclusive system of correctional education in Indian prisons. The successful reintegration of incarcerated individuals into mainstream society and the humanization of India's judicial system can be achieved by paying attention to the educational demands of prisoners.

Research Methodology

The method of qualitative policy analysis has been employed to understand how the framework for Prison reforms and prison education has been designed and further major gaps in the policy and its implementation are identified. The major policy documents, The Prison Act 1894, Revised Prison Act of 2023, and the latest Model Prison Manual 2016, have been reviewed and analyzed to critically evaluate the policy contents and identify gaps in execution through thematic analysis of policy's text. The Prisons Act of 1894 was the first legislation for the administration and management of prisons in India. Since then, various recommendations of committees, manuals and latest Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act of 2023 (Prisons Act 2023) have come into force. Hence, the context for this paper is the enactment of the Prisons Act 2023 and the recommendations of Model Prison Manual 2016, which will help us to understand policy shifts in the framework for Prison education and reforms.

Conceptual Framework: Prison Education for Rehabilitation of Prisoners

Prison education creates a network between social justice, correctional reforms, and the rehabilitation of prisoners. Education is grounded in the belief that it is a transformative tool that addresses the underlying factors contributing to poverty, lack of skills, criminal behaviours, and limited opportunities. According to academics, giving prisoners access to education enables them to think critically, develop, and

reintegrate into society with a more optimistic perspective. To connect the concept of prison education with rehabilitation, prison education can be seen as a part and form of rehabilitation (Behan, 2014: 20).

In the Indian context, prison education aligns with constitutional values and international human rights standards, emphasizing the rehabilitation and reintegration of incarcerated individuals into society. Education in prisons is viewed as a fundamental human right under international frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules, 2015). In India, the right to education is enshrined in Article 21A of the constitution, which underscores the importance of education for all, including incarcerated individuals.

The primary goal of prison education is to rehabilitate offenders by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to reintegrate into society as law-abiding citizens. Rehabilitation has gone through many manifestations over the centuries, including penitentiary, therapeutic, social learning and rights orientated models (Roth et.al, 2017). The Model Prison Manual (2016) explicitly advocates for educational and vocational training programmes as part of a comprehensive approach to prisoner reformation (GOI, MPM, 2016).

A significant number of the population in Indian prisons comes from marginalized and disadvantaged communities, many of whom lack access to employment or quality educational opportunities. Vocational training enhances inmates' employability, reducing economic dependency and encouraging lawful livelihoods (IGNOU, 2020). Prison education addresses systemic inequities by providing inmates with literacy programmes, vocational training, and higher education opportunities, thereby empowering them to break free from cycles of poverty and crime (NCRB, 2021). A study published in the *Journal of Correctional Education* revealed that inmates who engage in correctional education while being incarcerated have a higher likelihood of securing employment post-release and also chances of higher wages in comparison to non-participants (Steurer et.al., 2003: 14).

The tendency of repetitive crime is often associated with the criminal attitudes of ex-offenders, and this nature of recidivism generally drags them back to the dark cycles of punishments and prisons. Many researchers have emphasized the positive role of prison education in modifications on the nature of recidivism among prisoners. Research by the RAND corporation found that inmates who participate in educational programmes are 43% less likely to return to prison as compared to those who do not engage in such opportunities (Davis et al., 2013: xvi).

Types of Prison Education and Correctional Training Programmes in India

In India, prison education and correctional training programmes aim to rehabilitate inmates by addressing their educational and vocational needs along with life skills development for reintegration into society. These programmes are guided by the Model Prison Manual (2016) and enacted by The Prisons Act of 2023 issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, which emphasizes education as a fundamental right for prisoners. Educational initiatives often focus on basic literacy, as a significant percentage of prisoners in India come from marginalized backgrounds with limited formal education. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2021 data, approximately 27% of prisoners in India have not completed primary education. To address this, literacy programmes are conducted in collaboration with organizations like the National Literacy Mission (NLM 1988).

Prisons partner with institutions like the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) for secondary and higher education. IGNOU operates study centres within several prisons, offering diploma, undergraduate, and postgraduate courses tailored to the needs of incarcerated individuals (IGNOU, 2020). Vocational training is essential for inmates to provide them with employable skills. These programmes include carpentry, tailoring, weaving, plumbing, and computer training. States like Tamil Nadu and Delhi have been exceptionally proactive, introducing innovative vocational programmes, including horticulture and bakery training, to help inmates generate income post-release.

Many Indian prisons provide inmates with counselling and rehabilitation programmes, including anger management, drug addiction treatment, and mental health support. Like some prisons integrate cultural and moral education, including yoga and meditation, to promote mental well-being and behavioural change. The Art of Living's Prison SMART programme has transformed the lives of thousands of inmates around the world. This program heals the victim and empowers them to get back to mainstream society and make an honest living. This foundation is actively working for the transformation of prisoners in India and the Art of Living Foundation's Prison Smart initiative has been implemented in several states to help inmates manage stress and anger in productive directions.

Historical Evolution of Prison Policies in India

The Prisons Act of 1894 is one of India's oldest policy documents governing the management and administration of prisons. The primary focus of this policy document was on security, discipline, and management of prisons with special emphasis on

punitive measures. This Act was progressive for that time and provided provisions related to staff duties, prison officers, classification of prisoners, health standards, and sanitation issues. While it laid the foundational framework for prison administration, the Act was primarily punitive rather than reformatory, reflecting the colonial approach to incarceration. The Act has widely been criticized for its outdated approach and lack of emphasis on prisoner rehabilitation and reformation.

As the shortcomings of the Prison Act of 1894 came to light over time, demands for change increased. Committees such as the Justice Krishna Iyer Committee (1987) and Justice Mulla Committee (1983) stressed the shortcomings and recommended a change, for a restorative strategy. The All India Committee on Jail Reforms (1980-1983), chaired by Justice A.N. Mulla, emphasized the need for comprehensive prison reforms in India. Primarily these included the establishment of a national policy on prisons, the modernization of a prison infrastructure, and the introduction of rehabilitation programmes focusing on education and vocational training to facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into society. The committee also advocated for the induction of more women in the police force, recognizing their special role in handling women and child offenders. In 1987, the Justice Krishna Iyer Committee was appointed to study the conditions of women prisoners. It highlights the importance of education and skill development within the prison system, with the aim of transforming prisons into reformatory academic centres rather than detention centres.

The Model Prison Manual 2016 and The Prisons Act 2023 are both aimed at reforming and modernizing prison administration in India, but they differ in scope, legal standing, and specific objectives. Whereas the Model Prison Manual, 2016 is a guideline document intended to standardize prison administration across states, it lacks the force of law, leaving its adoption and enforcement to the discretion of individual states. The Prisons Act 2023, on the other hand, is a comprehensive legislative framework designed to replace the outdated Prisons Act of 1894. It provides binding legal provisions to enforce reforms, ensuring greater uniformity across states.

Model Prison Manual 2016

The Model Prison Manual 2016 of India was developed by the Ministry of Home Affairs with the aim to modernize India's prison system and to align with contemporary correctional principles. While it represents a significant shift from punitive to reformatory justice, several aspects, especially concerning prison education and correctional training programmes, invite both appreciation and criticism.

The Manual emphasizes prisoner rehabilitation through education, vocational training, and skill development by advocating for compulsory education amongst all adult prisoners to ensure functional literacy by the end of their sentence. Prisons are encouraged to partner with state education departments and adult literacy organizations to conduct literacy drives (GOI, 2016:163). Provision for prison education generally incorporates adult literacy programmes, primary, secondary and higher education (often in collaboration with institutions like NIOS, State Boards, and IGNOU), and library access (GOI, 2016: 160). This aligns with the belief that education is a key to reducing recidivism. The manual also suggests integrating prison education with the state's educational system to ensure continuity post-release.

This Manual is much focused for skill-building programmes tailored to local employment opportunities, enabling inmates to secure livelihoods post-release. The introduction of computer literacy, crafts, and trade-specific training reflects efforts to integrate inmates into modern society. This manual has recommended giving certificates to the inmates after completion of these courses. These skill oriented courses can enhance their employability after release. Encouraging partnerships with NGOs, professionals, and psychologists, the Manual takes a more inclusive approach to reform (GOI, 2016). This holistic view includes counselling and life skills training alongside academic and vocational education.

The Model Prisons Act 2023

The Ministry of Home Affairs also reviewed 'The Prisoners Act of 1900' and 'The Transfer of Prisoners Act of 1950' along with 'The Prisons Act of 1894. Relevant provisions of these important Acts have also been included in the 'Model Prisons Act of 2023.' The Governments of States and Union Territories have full autonomy to adopt the recommendations of this act in their jurisdictions with essential modifications which they may consider as necessary and also repeal the existing above three Acts in their jurisdictions.

The Model Prisons Act of 2023 is a significant shift in India's approach to prison system with more emphasis on reformation and rehabilitation. This policy document recommended this provision mainly through structured prison education and correctional training programmes. This modern legislative framework addresses the lacunae of the outdated Prisons Act of 1894, aligning prison management with contemporary correctional philosophies. The Act of 2023 codified the recommendations of Model Prison Manual 2016 and underscores the importance of education in rehabilitation and integration of prisoners, advocating compulsory

education for illiterate prisoners and encouraging secondary education and higher studies for the prisoners having low educational levels. It mandates the establishment of structured educational programmes within prisons to fulfil the need of this time, facilitating access to academic resources and promoting collaborations with external educational institutions. Vocational training is also a focal point, with the Act recommending the creation of skill development centres offering courses in trades such as carpentry, tailoring, and computer applications.

This Model Act has provisions for reformation, rehabilitation and integration of prisoners in the society. The provision for ‘Welfare Programs for Prisoners’ and ‘After-Care and Rehabilitation Services’, are integral part of institutional care and are recommended in this act². Some important and under addressed provisions of 2016 Manual as technological integration, such as video conferencing for appearances in courts, and digital record keeping are also focused in the Prisons Act 2023. These initiatives aim to enhance inmates’ employability upon release, facilitating their reintegration into society.

This Act of 2023 also recommended for the creation of prison development boards to ensure regular monitoring, improvement and the periodic inspections by judicial and human rights authorities. Beyond education and vocational training, the Act introduces comprehensive rehabilitation and aftercare services. It emphasizes the need for individualized rehabilitation plans, psychological counselling, and substance abuse treatment programmes. The Act also underlines the importance of aftercare services, assisting released prisoners in securing employment and housing, thereby reducing recidivism rates. For monitoring of post-release behaviour it emphasizes structured follow-up programmes to prevent recidivism.

(GOI, 2023: [Chapter, XX]).

Discussion and Analysis

(i) Gaps and Challenges in Prison Education as Tool of Reformation and Rehabilitation

There are various gaps in rulebook of policy documents and the implementations of the provisions. The Model Prison Manual 2016 and The Prisons Act 2023 both provide detailed guidelines for the management, administration, and reformation of Indian prisons, focusing on the welfare of inmates, rehabilitation, and modernization, but its implementation across various states remains inconsistent. The Prisons Act

²Unstarred Question number 3007 (Lok Sabha dated 8 August 2023), available at <https://www.mha.gov.in/MHA1/Par2017/pdfs/par2023-pdfs/LS-08082023/3007.pdf>

2023 transforms the aspirations of the Model Prison Manual 2016 into actionable legal mandates. The Act represents the next step in institutionalizing reforms and ensuring a standardized, humane, and rehabilitative approach to prison administration across India. While the 2016 Manual served as a policy guide, the 2023 Act ensures enforceability and uniformity, paving the way for more consistent and impactful reform efforts.

(ii) Overcrowding in Prisons

The latest data of NCRB 2022 in “Prison Statistics India” report revealed the poor conditions of overcrowding in Indian prisons. According to this report, the occupancy rate of Indian prisons is 131%, which means they have 131% inmates of their actual capacity with 5173,220 inmates against a capacity of 4,36,266 (MHA, 2022: 20). It shows the major issue of overcrowding in Indian prisons, among which around 75.8% are under trials (MHA, 2022: 33). This overcrowding makes the situation very difficult to implement the provisions of [prison policies adequately. Prisoners face several issues related to living conditions, food, health care, late trials and many more. This overcrowding also affects the programmes for reformation of prisoners, including educational and vocational programmes due to the lack of space, material and staff to conduct them efficiently

(iii) Inadequate Educational and Correctional Training Programmes

Although the new Prisons Act 2023 and Model Prison Manual 2016, are much focused on the educational and vocational training programmes for the prisoners, these lack in the number and quality as per the demands of the prisons and are not appropriately connected with the market demands. Some NGOs like India Vision Foundation, Aasra, Divyajyoti, etc., work for the welfare for prisoners in various ways like education, vocational training, and rehabilitation. However, access to these facilities is limited in many prisons. There is also a lack of skilled facilitators to execute these educational and vocational programmes in the prisons. Either facilitators are not appointed; or sometimes, they don’t have proper training and interest for the quality execution of the programmes. Policy documents also recommend free legal aid and legal literacy programmes for prisoners to protect their fundamental rights and take the necessary action to get justice, but these programmes are insufficient in number.

(iv) Insufficient Resources

It is believed that “An investment in prison education is an investment in public safety, because education has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to reduce recidivism” (Vacca 2004), but the budget allocated for prison education in India is little as per demand of time. In 2022-2023, the expenditure on prison education in India was 9.91 crore rupees (MHA, 2022: 279), which accounted for just 0.4% of the total prison expenditure of 2,528.45 crore rupees. The total budget allocated to prisons across the country was 8,725 crore rupees. Although the budget increased from 6,740.6 crore rupees in 2020-2021 to 8,725 crore rupees in 2022-2023, only a small fraction (0.4%) was designated for prison education. Due to limited financial resources, the implementation of recommendations for prison education, trained staff, improved infrastructure, study materials, and other necessary facilities could not be adequately achieved.

(v) Insufficient Psychological and Mental Support

Prisons are considered places of darkness and depression. Prisoners need proper psychological counselling and emotional support to come out of their trauma. Both policy documents are concerned with the mental health and well-being of the prisoners and recommend psychological counselling and support services for the prisoners to successfully reintegrate into society (GOI, 2016; GOI, 2023). However, most prisons lack such mental health services. This gap exacerbates the issues of anxiety, violence, self-harm, and sometimes suicide in prisons. Even though mental health services are available in prisons, the staff-to-prisoner ratio is inadequate, leading to insufficient attention and inadequate counseling and mental support for individuals. While policies provide for de-addiction programs and behavioural therapies, their implementation is minimal, often limited to a few prisons or existing only on paper.

(vi) Lack of Accountability and Monitoring in Prisons

Both the policy documents suggested executing the grievance redressal system and monitoring bodies for the smooth management of the Indian prisons but this recommendation could not be implemented with same force, in all the states. Some prisons independently set up monitoring bodies, but due to lack of resources and the necessary authority; they could not carry out effective oversight. There is lack of transparency and public accountability in prison administration, thus it has led to poor implementation of policies.

(vii) Variances in Adoption of Policies

Prisons in India are a subject of state that comes under the seventh schedule of India. Thus, state governments are responsible for the management and administration of prisons. The Model Prison Manual 2016 and The Prisons Act 2023 - both the policy documents give various recommendations related to the welfare, reformation, and rehabilitation of prisoners in Indian prisons. However, states are not legally bound to implement all the recommendations with the same force and interests. Some states have adopted and integrated these policy recommendations effectively. In contrast, others have limited adoption of the same due to lack of resources, political agendas of states, administrative reasons, or due to regional disparities.

(viii) Resistant to Reform

Policy documents reflect the shifting of the punitive model of punishment to the rehabilitative model of punishment through their recommendations, for reforming and rehabilitating prisoners to integrate them back successfully into society. Nevertheless, prisons are often taken as institutions of punishment rather than reform. Prison staff and sometimes prisoners themselves are not mentally prepared for reformatory activities like education or any correctional and vocational activities. This unsupportive attitude of prisoners and staff put the steps of reforms, back in conventional mode.

Suggestions and Recommendations**(1) Establishment of Prison Education Department**

There is a lacuna that Indian prisons still do not have any specific department for formulating and regulating prison education and correctional training programmes. There should be a proper mandate for prison education programmes nationwide to establish curriculum standards, the nature of programmes, the appointment of trained teachers, providing learning materials, and proper evaluation. This department should be aligned with national educational agencies like IGNOU, NIOS, state boards, and universities to provide prisoners with primary, secondary, and higher education. There should be a structured National Prison Educational Policy to ensure education for each inmate, as education is a fundamental right for prisoners.

(2) Focus on Skill Development Programmes

Employment and fulfilment of financial needs are the major obstacles to the reintegration of prisoners back into society after coming out of prison. Correctional training programmes should focus on skill development in collaboration with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and private sector organizations. These skills and trades-based programmes should be designed according to market demands. Diplomas and certificates should be offered to the prisoners in trades like tailoring, agriculture, carpentry, and plumbing, along with market-driven training for employment assurance. Financial literacy and small business management programmes should be organized to help with the entrepreneurial training of prisoners.

(3) Integration of Technology in Education

The prison education system should be integrated with online platforms to connect prisoners with mainstream education; for this purpose, the prison department should install secure e-learning systems and provide access to offline digital libraries, for example, with pre-loaded educational content and classes. Prisons should make fruitful partnerships with platforms like SWAYAM, NIOS, and other online education initiatives to tailor courses for inmates. Prisoners should receive basic IT training and digital literacy programmes for immersive learning experiences.

(4) Promote Functional Literacy and Basic Education

Literacy campaigns among prisoners should be organized to enhance and promote the functional literacy needed for day-to-day requirements like health, financial, media, computer, or document literacy. This concept of functional literacy should also be included in the prisoners' basic education curriculum. As education is a fundamental right and prisoners have the right to access it, the prison administration should conduct mandatory literacy programmes for illiterate inmates. Prisons should come together with the National Literacy Mission to fulfil the requirements of resources and to train facilitators. National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) provides free education to inmates to complete their basic schooling. However, this initiative needs to be implemented more effectively in each prison, for every prisoner in India. Basic education should be provided in the regional language or mother tongue so prisoners can understand and learn effortlessly.

(5) Opportunities for Higher Education

This vulnerable group of society should be encouraged to increase their educational level by providing better opportunities for secondary and higher education. Prison administration should facilitate enrolment of eligible inmates in various learning programmes through correspondence and distance learning in universities like IGNOU. Other institutions and universities like IGNOU should also come forward to provide better educational opportunities by introducing helpful courses based upon legal rights, paralegal services, or community service programmes for the prisoners, which can help this section to successfully reintegrate into society. Academic research should also be promoted for the inmates. Universities should also provide prisoners with lecturers, trained staff, and educational sessions to create their interests and enhance their knowledge in particular subjects and courses. Scholarships should be awarded to eligible inmates, and there should be a strong provision to connect them with mainstream education so that they can complete their courses and respective degrees after getting released from prison.

There should be proper access to the study materials, and examination centres should be prison-specific to give prisoners remarkable confidence and mental comfort when appearing in exams. The address on the educational certificates should not be of that particular prison, as it creates problems in obtaining jobs after coming out and causes mental trauma to the prisoners.

(6) Counselling and Life Skills based Programmes

Prisons are places of darkness and anxiety, which make it impossible to maintain mental balance for prisoners. Psychological and moral education should be provided by introducing ethical teachings from various religions and philosophies to stabilize the mental conditions of prisoners. Regular meditation and yoga programmes should be organized in prisons to improve the prisoners' mental well-being and self-discipline. Counselling and motivational sessions by trained counsellors should be organized in prisons for the issues of anger management, anxiety, depression, suicidal tendencies, and conflict resolution among prisoners. Professional psychologists and social workers should be engaged in psychological and educational counselling for the prisoners.

(7) Post-Release Support

There is a strong need for after-care programmes for prisoners to make life easy and successful after re-entering in society. Retired teachers, social workers,

and volunteers should be engaged in educating and supporting the prisoners. The peer teaching concept is also helpful in encouraging educated inmates to teach and guide fellow prisoners. Support from government agencies and NGOs to obtain jobs, complete their education, and gain financial support to establish small business setups is a boon for re-establishing prisoners into society. Prisoners should also receive employment placement assistance that links trained inmates with industries and employers.

Each of these steps ensures that education is a strong tool to rehabilitate this vulnerable section (prisoners) in society with respected positions by equipping them with life skills, self-confidence, and everything they deserve to be better citizens.

Conclusion

Model Prison Manual 2016 and The Prisons Act 2023, both the documents are ambitious in nature for reforming Indian prisons. There are several gaps in their successful implementation and full realization. These policy documents serve as foundational elements in shifting punishment philosophies towards a more reformatory and restorative approach. However, the success and responsiveness of these policies can be greatly enhanced through the collaborative and progressive efforts of states and union territories in India, evolving societal norms, and implementing reformatory methodologies. Their focus on educational and correctional training programmes in prisons, reflects the commitments to humanize the penal system to reintegrate the former prisoners in society and thereby make them law abiding citizens.

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